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ABSTRACT

Because studies have shown that educators need to become more aware of the effects of stress upon their students, this guide presents basic information about stress and anxiety in children from infancy to adolescence. Experiences are provided through which students can learn to deal more effectively with stress, together with definitions of the sources and manifestations of stress in childhood and adolescence. Two conversations with a kindergarten child illustrate a child's inability to think of alternatives in a hypothetical stressful situation. Major stressors, as well as ways of expressing and dealing with them, are listed by grade level. To help teachers become more aware of their role in the process of learning to master stressful feelings and situations, the materials conclude with a list of suggestions regarding dicipline, respect, goal-setting and planning, control, stress symptoms, and physical fitness. (Author/CS)

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STRESS WITHIN STUDENTS:

DO EDUCATORS CAUSE AND/OR PROLONG IT?

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STRESS WITHIN STUDENTS:
DO EDUCATORS CAUSE AND/OR PROLONG IT?

Recently, much study and literature has been devoted to identifying, coping with, and eliminating stress for professionals within educational settings. Numerous workshops and conferences have been designed for this purpose. Throughout the last year alone, I have conducted countless workshops, seminars, and keynote addresses for both administrators and teachers concerning stress. From the feedback and discussion in those sessions, combined with ten years of my own research and teaching, it has become evident that **students, too, encounter a great deal of stress** throughout their twelve-and-a-half years of school involvement.

Studies have shown that educators must be more aware of the effects of stress upon their students. Educators want to know what they can do. Concerned educators are serious when they ask for help in improving the teaching and learning environments of students. They want to know how they can best keep harmful and stressful learning situations to a minimum. They need to know how they can best provide experiences whereby youngsters can better understand their own stress and effectively learn to cope with, reduce, and eliminate stress. This article serves as an introduction to that information. Hopefully, it is an area in which we will direct more attention.

How children deal with stress during their adult years is determined to a great extent by what occurs during their formative years. It is not only what happens during the early years of life, but oftentimes what does not happen that is important. This is not so surprising because many scientific studies have shown how important early experiences are in influencing later behavior. (For example, early childhood studies have shown that children who get adequate stimulation, where adults meet their needs during periods of great dependency, develop a sense of trust in others, whereas children deprived of this kind of experience lose trust in others and engage in unacceptable behavior as a means of coping with stress.)

It is not often acceptable to fight physically against or flee from the opposition within educational settings: the condescending peer, rules and regulations of many teachers throughout the day, parental guidelines that are not always congruent with an individual's own set of desires and values, school policy, and others who execute their control over students--sometimes without due consideration to being "consistent and fair." These all point to just a few of the problems with which students must learn to contend or, as many adolescents say, "survive." Many youngsters contend that much of their school existence involves forced choices of alternatives that result in periods of personal quandary or confusion within their everyday lives. These persistent quandaries promote a continual state of smoldering frustration and mental suffering that are indeed stressful. What happens next may be a translation of mental suffering into physical expression. We use the term "psychosomatic"--meaning "mind-body"--to describe this. Regardless

of the nature of the stressor, whether it be playful or serious, the body-mind mechanism always responds the same biologically. This helps us understand stress and its relationship to psychosomatic disease or psychosomatic health.

It is not so hard for us to accept the frequent excuses that students give, such as "headaches" or "upset stomachs," as merely temporary conditions and directly related to a stressful event(s). But there has been recent scientific data about the more chronic and serious states of stress. In 1979, there were a significant number of American students whose deaths were related to cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

A Harvard Medical School publication designed to promote accurate and timely health information cited a "clear and direct line of connection between isolated stress stimuli and the development of heart diseases."[1] Furthermore, cardiologists (Drs. Friedman and Rosenman) have conducted and popularized conclusive research on the role of personality behavior versus stress in coronary artery disease. Moreover, Harvard's research shows countless case reports that point directly to the role of stress in the development of diseases.

The list of diseases thought to be related to or caused by stress is almost endless, including asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, an overactive thyroid gland, allergies, ulcers, colitis, high blood pressure, hypertension, and migraine headaches, among others. Physicians have the impression that stress plays a major role in making any medical problem worse in terms of symptoms and total impact upon a patient's life.

"The fear surrounding this most dreaded of all diseases, cancer, has been heightened by recent reports suggesting that destructive emotions

can contribute to or cause cancer. One popular theory suggests that such emotions can weaken the surveillance mechanisms of our body which are constantly destroying abnormal cells that might otherwise cause cancerous growths. There is also increasing research interest in the possibility that healthy emotions might be harnessed by a cancer patient to 'fight' his or her disease."[2]

In short, the straight-line connection between stress and disease is being given serious examination. Health professionals are increasingly aware of the role of emotional well-being in arousing physical responses that are potentially damaging to the body.

Many problems or stress situations of modern life depend upon our capacity to handle them. If we fail to find effective solutions, stress will increase and persist, take its toll, and we can break down mentally and physically. On the other hand, if we keep "fit" and learn to master the pressures, stress will quickly abate.

Definition

Defined, the concept of stress implies more than the physiological collection of predictable body responses—increased heart rate, soaring blood pressure, rapid breathing, increased muscle tension, accelerated blood clotting, increased circulation, release of excess adrenaline into the blood stream, nervous system reaction, etc. The famous description in 1914 by the Harvard physiologist, Dr. Walter B. Cannon, of this arousal as the "flight of fight" syndrome responded to the exquisite ability of a living organism to prepare itself almost instantaneously for an appropriate response to physical threat. Years later (1916),

Dr. Hans Selye of Montreal first popularized the word "stress" while describing this adaptational response of the human body.

Since then the word has become widely used to cover not only predictable physical threats but a whole range of social psychological stimuli that might provoke such reactions. We use the word as a synonym for less precise terms--such as anxiety or tension--to indicate that prolonged stress is potentially damaging. The word "stress" in current usage refers to the whole range of modern psychological dilemmas which triggers our bodies into a state of arousal for which no appropriate release can be found.

Educators need to be more aware of the effects of stress upon their students as well as how they best help students. Teacher preparation programs (and in-service programs) fail to address this issue.

Early Childhood

Dr. Lee Salk says that "when children are unable to cope effectively with the stresses of their lives, they sometimes show both psychological and physical growth difficulties."[3] During early childhood, the child is totally dependent upon adults for survival and therefore tends to lack the resources and know-how (considered as acceptable behavior by adults) for coping assertively and effectively with any kind of stress. The signal an infant has for showing a stress reaction is crying, and the only mechanism available for eliminating that stress is to go off into a world of sleep. In a sense, all the unpleasantness is obliterated by this form of withdrawal. Unless a child is helped to cope with the stresses, through competent and efficient care during this time of total

dependency, crying and/or withdrawal can become a characteristic personality pattern for dealing with any form of unpleasantness. Dr. Salk says that infants subjected to long or frequent periods of stress do not become stronger and more effective in dealing with problems later on and, in fact, learn to use infantile methods for dealing with later stresses. Children learn to "tune out" the means for finding comfort from the unpleasant frustrations they experience. Adults can establish a similar pattern. Everyone can cite an example of an adult who reverts to some form of behavior (such as excessive drinking, prolonged patterns of sleep, unacceptable behaviors, etc.) rather than coming to terms with the problem and solving it. While the major stresses during infancy are brought about by the frustration of infantile needs, Dr. Salk suggests that the needs of infants are greatly underestimated. He maintains that the period of infancy is an extremely stressful period of life and only because there is a lack of exchange in verbal communication and understanding, adults do not always know or understand the reason for an infant's stress.

School-Age Children

When children begin their career as students, parents are usually the first to detect the cues of stress. Countless parents have told me about their kindergarten child who, after being enrolled in school for the first time, exhibits either stuttering, bedwetting, nail biting, increased thumb sucking, nightmares, loss of appetite or even physical complaints or headaches and stomachaches. When under prolonged stress, children show an aversion to even going to school. If and when this

occurs, perceptive teachers should find out what is going on and determine the source of stress. An attempt should be made to eliminate that stress so that the child doesn't "turn off" altogether about going to school.

In speaking with psychologists and young children I have learned that many of the major stress reactions for children center around the school. Children are fearful about the reactions of other children, the teachers, and they worry about what they are missing out on at home while they are away. Since they encounter new teachers, they fear the unknown discipline techniques that a teacher may use "if they aren't good." It is interesting to note, however, that their greatest fear is that they wonder each day if their parents will return to pick them up, or return to the home environment at the end of a given day.

For these reasons educators should encourage and explain the general outline of the school day to the child; provide consistent and fair discipline and order; and prepare the child for the pleasures, satisfactions, opportunities, difficulties and rewards that a school environment has to offer. Educators should also actively encourage parents to help them in this pursuit and encourage parents to be especially emotionally and physically supportive during these important beginning school years.

Stress in Adolescence

Adolescence is a period when some of the most noticeable physical and emotional changes occur. (I stress noticeable because I am a firm believer that the human organism undergoes continual change both

emotionally and physically, and that only our **AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, and TREATMENT** of these stages remain inadequate. Those who understand the implications of G. Sheehy's PASSAGES: Predictable Crises in Adult Life and also have a good background of early childhood education will more easily understand and accept this.) Dramatic body growth and change are highly visible within the adolescent. It is a time of fast childhood, prolonged adolescence, a prolonged period of education, and only gradual entrance into the rights and responsibilities of adulthood. There is a very real social and economic distinction. Youngsters especially complain of being plagued by uncertainty, confusion, and even despair at this stage of development.

Much of the stress within the stage of adolescence has to do with this fact: it is extremely difficult for individuals who are strong, energetic, vigorous, determined, and potentially capable of living active, independent lives to be in some aspects still children, and in some aspects treated like dependent children--protected, watched, and all too often kept tightly in line.

Our school institutions as well as society project somewhat inconsistent attitudes toward youth. On one hand we urge them to exhibit independent critical thinking skills--reminding them how bold, entrepreneurial, active, heroic, assertive, and adventurous their forefathers were. Yet on the other hand we ask them to delay rewards and gratification, stick to a course of study, curb their desire for independence, ask them for obedience to the demands of authorities--to submit to the authority of educators, parents, and policy, regardless of how confined they feel or how such demands are in conflict with their own value system.

I am not suggesting that this is all wrong, but I am suggesting that rarely do we treat an adolescent's viewpoint as the expression of a shrewd person's capacity for social criticism.

Moreover, we tend to glorify youths who have learned how to effectively deal with conflict ("my second child just never gave me any problems"), or avoid conflicts, or have learned how to play the right adult games. Those youths who do feel that inevitable conflict of what they desire as opposed to others, however, have yet another measurement of their confusion, turmoil, and ambiguity.

Adolescence differs in that the degree to which such a struggle takes place is usually greater and more visible than in other stages. Decisions of lasting significance must be made and a commitment of time and energy is required. In short, the "puberty stricken," as teachers call them, must go about making decisions about their future life. I have noticed two certain posters which read "Life is a Journey, not a Destination," and "Life is a Mystery to be Lived, Not a Problem to be Solved." These posters can be spotted in subways, airports, offices, and homes, but primarily in the schools. The message literally means that throughout our pursuit of living, our lives should have more "flow"--that is, consistency, timeliness, and relevancy. Yet while adolescents undergo these changes (causing frequent episodes of stress, moody introspection, confusion, anxious moments of despair) in their struggle for independence and intimacy, we ask them who they are, what they want to do, how and with whom they want to spend the rest of their lives--we ask them to make decisions of lasting significance.

These factors produce a great deal of stress for youngsters which is often exhibited through disciplinary problems, continual absenteeism,

psychosomatic behavior, vandalism, episodic moodiness that turns into chronic and severe depression (if persistent and prolonged, suicide can result), suspicion, relentless stretches of melancholy, withdrawal, acts of delinquency, prolonged feelings of worthlessness, severe disorders of the skin, and metabolic diseases.

Physicians diagnose more "acute adolescent turmoil," as they call it, than they do direct physical illnesses for the adolescent patients they see.

Young people themselves are often (but not always) the best judges of when their stress has gotten out of control and when they need to turn to others. Teachers, administrators, and counselors who have proven themselves as warm, confident, and trusting adults will have students seek them out year after year. Youths need to know that there are those within the educational setting whom they can trust and are able to talk with comfortably and reassuringly. Students need educators who recognize their need to grow up and assert their own authority and initiative as they establish momentum and test their own beliefs and values.

In order to assist parents, teachers, and others concerned with reducing the stresses that youngsters often encounter as a result of their association with schooling, it is important to identify the major sources of stress and recognize the actions through which youngsters exhibit those stressors. The following information identifies the dominate stresses at each grade level and points out student actions and their methods of coping with stress.

Kindergarten thru grade 3 are particularly noteworthy because of the consistency of both male and female youngsters to have not only like stressors, but reaction to a given stressor appears to be fairly congruent. This differs with older school youngsters.

It is particularly important for parents to assist educators in examining and addressing these stressors. These stressors and reactions should not be taken lightly. They are of tantamount concern to youngsters. For example, Kindergarten children worry each and every day (periodically throughout the day) if someone will return for them. This fear of not knowing if a parent, loved one, or significant other will return at a days end produces a tremendous amount of uncertainty and fear. It is clearly shown in a youngster's inability to generate alternatives concerning stressful issues. Children, aided by imagination, are unusually adepth at generating alternatives to problems or concerns. The following conversations with Jennifer, a Kindergarten child, illustrates this point quite clearly and also reflects a childs ability to generate alternatives, except when faced with a major stressor such as in the second conversation.

Conversation:

"Students, I know that you were excited about going on the trip to the zoo today, but we can't get there because the bus we were going to take isn't working right today and can't be fixed until later this week. We'll have to go another time."

Jennifer responds: "I know what we can do! My uncle can fix it! He fixed my bicycle once and it only took him a 'short minute'. Or, we could walk! Or, we could call my mom and all her friends can come and get us in all their cars! And, we could ask all the teachers here at school to take us! And maybe we could call the police department because they help people when they need help! And, we could call

the fire department because they have big trucks and sometimes give people rides on their big trucks! Hey, let's call 'Pete the Dragon'! When I'm afraid to walk somewhere I just fly there with Pete because he won't hurt children! Maybe the zoo people can bring some of the animals here - no that isn't such a good idea is it because they (animals) might run away, right? Well, we can just go tomorrow."

Like most Kindergarten children, Jennifer graples with the uncertainty of someone returning to school and/or home for her. This is often witnessed in storytime activities where children periodically reinforce and/or clarify (for themselves) the involvement of an adult's care, love, and concern for them. This is evident in sidetracked remarks (or comments not associated with the activity at hand) such as "when mom picks me up...", "What time do we leave for home?", "My mom's taking me to ____today", to comments of distraction such as during an activity requiring concentration and a student remarks, "Don't you think my mom is pretty". Further evidence is obtained in observing the nap or rest periods for Kindergarten children, and even nightly sleep habits. It is not uncommon for these children to carry on a dialogue centering on this concern.

Conversation:

When asked outright what she would do if her mother didn't return for her today, Jennifer responded, "What if my Mom and Dad were killed today?" End of comment.

Jennifer did not generate alternatives such as, "Well, I'd call my Dad at work", or "I'd go home with Penny because she lives two houses away", or "I'd call Mrs. Obin because she's my sitter and lives right next door", or "I'd just wait until they did come", or "They will come for me!" All of these would have been potential and acceptable alternatives.

This typical dialogue clearly demonstrates the child's inability to generate alternatives when faced with a stressor.

The following lists identify the school youngsters major stressors at each grade level as well as methods of expressing and/or dealing with that stressor. It should be noted that these fears are felt and interpreted by children, as students.

KINDERGARTEN

STRESSOR	SIGNAL
1) UNCERTAINTY + FEAR OF ABANDONMENT OF A SIGNIFICANT ADULT.	1) APPLICABLE DIALOGUE EVIDENCED IN NAP AND SLEEP; DAYDREAMING; CHILD REINFORCES AN ADULTS 'CONCERN FOR SELF'; CRYING ASSOCIATED WITH PARENTAL ABSENCE; NAILBITING.
2) FEAR OF WETTING THEMSELVES.	2) RESULTS IN FREQUENT TRIPS TO BATHROOM; OCCASIONAL WETTING; NAILBITING; THUMB SUCKING; FINGER TWIRLING THEIR HAIR.
3) FEAR OF PUNISHMENT/REPRIMANDS FROM TEACHER. (THIS RESULTS IN A YOUNGSTERS DESIRE TO "PLEASE" THEIR TEACHER AT THIS AGE, BUT HOLDING UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT HOW TO DO THAT, AND FEAR THAT THE TEACHER MAY NOT BE PLEASED, OR EVEN ANGRY. THEY FEAR THE TEACHERS "RESPONSE" IN EXPRESSING TEACHER DISAPPROVAL.)	

GRADE 1

STRESSOR

1) FEAR OF RIDING THE BUS.

2) WETTING IN CLASS.

3) TEACHER DISAPPROVAL.

4) RIDICULED BY CLASS PEERS AND OLDER STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL SETTING.

5) RECEIVING FIRST REPORT CARD AND NOT PASSING TO SECOND GRADE.

SIGNAL

1) PERSUADE PARENTS TO DRIVE THEM TO DRIVE THEM TO SCHOOL.

2) OVERLY CONCERNED, MUCH TIME AND THOUGHT DEVOTED TO "WHAT - IF" CONSEQUENCES. (DAYDREAMING) AND OCCASIONAL WETTING IN CLASS BY ANXIETIES.

3) CONTINUAL SEEKING OF TEACHER APPROVAL AS OPPOSED TO MORE INDEPENDENT ACTIONS.

4) CHILD BECOMES 'INWARD', EXPRESSES DESIRE TO NOT WANT TO COME TO SCHOOL.

5) STOMACH ACHES, NERVOUSNESS, NAIL-BITING, BEDWETTING, CONCERN EVIDENT IN VERBAL EXPRESSION WHILE NAPPING/SLEEPING.

GRADE 2

STRESSOR

1) FREQUENTLY MISSES A PARTICULAR PARENT.
2) FEAR NOT BEING ABLE TO UNDERSTAND A GIVEN LESSON; I.E., WON'T BE ABLE TO SPELL WORDS FOR TESTS, PASS A TEST, ETC.
3) NOT BEING ASKED TO BE A "TEACHER HELPER".
4) FEAR TEACHER'S DISCIPLINE.
5) FEAR OF BEING DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CHILDREN IN DRESS AND APPEARANCE.

SIGNAL

1) WANTS TO GO HOME/BE WITH PARENT.
2) INATTENTION, CRYING, IMPATIENCE WITH SELF.
3) FEELS THEY ARE "DISLIKED" BY TEACHER; SEEKS ANY TEACHER ATTENTION.
4) REFUSES DIRECT EYE CONTACT IN A TEACHER-STUDENT ACTIVITY.
5) FEEL THEY ARE NOT "LIKED" BY OTHER CHILDREN.

GRADE 3

stressor	signal
1) BEING CHOSEN LAST ON ANY TEAM.	1) VERBAL EXPRESSION OF NOT WANTING TO PLAY "THIS STUPID GAME". ALSO, EVIDENT OF BEING ABSENT (SICK) ON A GIVEN DAY.
2) PARENT CONFERENCE.	2) FAILURE TO NOTIFY PARENT OR TAKE HOME NOTICES. ALSO, DISPLAY PSYCHOSOMATIC ILLNESS ON THIS GIVEN DAY. EXTREME IS EVIDENT IN 'PERFECT' BEHAVIOR ON THAT DAY.
3) FEAR OF PEER DISAPPROVAL AND FEAR OF NOT BEING LIKED BY THE TEACHER.	3) COMPLAINT ABOJT BEING EXCLUDED FROM FAVORITE ACTIVITIES.
4) FEAR TEST TAKING AND FEAR NOT HAVING ENOUGH TIME TO COMPLETE WORK EXPECTATIONS ON ANY AND ALL TASK ASSIGNMENTS. (FEAR OF FAILURE TO PERFORM WELL)	4) CARELESS WORK, ABSENT ON A TEST DAY; TASK AVOIDANCE.
5) STAYING AFTER SCHOOL.	5) RUSH TO COMPLETE SCHOOL WORK; WANTS PARENTS TO MAKE A COMMITMENT FOR PICKING THEM UP ON CERTAIN DAYS.

GRADE 3

stressor	signal
1) BEING CHOSEN LAST ON ANY TEAM.	1) VERBAL EXPRESSION OF NOT WANTING TO PLAY "THIS STUPID GAME". ALSO, EVIDENT OF BEING ABSENT (SICK) ON A GIVEN DAY.
2) PARENT CONFERENCE.	2) FAILURE TO NOTIFY PARENT OR TAKE HOME NOTICES. ALSO, DISPLAY PSYCHOSOMATIC ILLNESS ON THIS GIVEN DAY. EXTREME IS EVIDENT IN 'PERFECT' BEHAVIOR ON THAT DAY.
3) FEAR OF PEER DISAPPROVAL AND FEAR OF NOT BEING LIKED BY THE TEACHER.	3) COMPLAINT ABOUT BEING EXCLUDED FROM FAVORITE ACTIVITIES.
4) FEAR TEST TAKING AND FEAR NOT HAVING ENOUGH TIME TO COMPLETE WORK EXPECTATIONS ON ANY AND ALL TASK ASSIGNMENTS. (FEAR OF FAILURE TO PERFORM WELL)	4) CARELESS WORK, ABSENT ON A TEST DAY; TASK AVOIDANCE.
5) STAYING AFTER SCHOOL.	5) RUSH TO COMPLETE SCHOOL WORK; WANTS PARENTS TO MAKE A COMMITMENT FOR PICKING THEM UP ON CERTAIN DAYS.

GRADE 4

stressor	signal
1) BEING CHOSEN LAST ON ANY TEAM.	1) VERBAL EXPRESSION OF NOT WANTING TO PLAY THIS "STUPID GAME". ALSO, EVIDENT OF BEING ABSENT (SICK) ON A GIVEN DAY.
2) PEER DISAPPROVAL IN DRESS APPEARANCE.	2) WILL CHANGE CLOTHES SEVERAL TIMES IN THE MORNING BEFORE REACHING A DECISION OF WHAT THEY WANT (AND INTEND!) TO WEAR. HOSTILITY SHOWN TOWARD ADULT WHO SELECTS THAT DAY'S OUTFIT.
3) THIS STUDENT BEGINS SELECTION OF A HIGHLY PERSONALIZED FRIEND. FEAR IS THAT A PARTICULAR FRIEND WILL SELECT A DIFFERENT FRIEND, OR SHARE "THEIR SECRETS".	3) JEALOUSLY GUARDS A FRIENDSHIP.
4) FEAR OF STUDENT RIDICULE.	4) NAME CALLING IS "FAIR PLAY".
5) FEAR OF NOT BEING PERSONALLY LIKED BY THE TEACHER.	5) WANTS TO ASSOCIATE WITH THE TEACHER.

GRADE 5

stressor	signal
1) FEAR OF BEING SELECTED LAST ON <u>ANY</u> TEAM.	1) VERBAL EXPRESSION OF NOT WANTING TO PLAY "THIS STUPID GAME". ALSO, EVIDENT OF BEING ABSENT (SICK) ON A GIVEN DAY.
2) FEAR OF LOOSING "BEST FRIEND" OR THAT FRIEND WILL SHARE "SECRETS".	2) JEALOUSLY GUARDS BEST FRIEND.
3) FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO COMPLETE SCHOOL WORK.	3) PROCRASTINATES ON TASK ASSIGNMENTS; WORK CARELESSLY COMPLETED.
4) FEAR OF PEER DISAPPROVAL.	4) EXPECTS TO SELECT OWN CLOTHING; OWN ACTIVITIES; OWN FRIENDS.
5) FEAR OF NOT BEING A "BIG 6th GRADER" NEXT YEAR.	5) CONTINUALLY GENERATES INFORMATION/ CONCERNS ON GRADES OR "PASSING".

GRADE 6

stressor	signal
1) FEAR OF NOT BEING SELECTED ON A TEAM.	1) VERBAL EXPRESSION OF NOT WANTING TO PLAY "THIS STUPID GAME". ALSO, EVIDENT OF BEING ABSENT (SICK) ON A GIVEN DAY.
2) FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN CONCERNING THEIR OWN SEXUALITY.	2) SHARING OF/IN GOSSIP/RUMORS/ MYTHS/JOKES CONCERNING SEXUALITY IN ALL SPECIES.
3) FEAR OF NOT PASSING INTO MIDDLE SCHOOL/ JUNIOR HIGH.	3) RENEWED CONCENTRATION ON HOME-WORK, OR PRONOUNCED PROCRASTIN-ATION.
4) FEAR DISAPPROVAL FROM PEERS ON APPEAR-ANCE.	4) RENEWED EMPHASIS ON APPEARANCE. EXPERIMENTATION WITH APPEARANCE (HAIR, CLOTHES, ETC.)
5) FEAR OF BEING UNPOPULAR.	5) BEGINS TO SELECT NUMEROUS FRIENDS, BUT GUARDS A SELECTED FRIEND (SAME SEX).

GRADE 7

stressor	signal
1) FEAR OF BEING SELECTED 1st (AND HAVING TO LEAD) AND FEAR OF BEING PICKED LAST (INTERPRETED AS BEING DISLIKED OR UNPOPULAR).	1) EXHIBIT EXTREME SHYNESS OR BOLDNESS. INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT BEHAVIOR BECOMES EVIDENT.
2) FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN CONCERNING THEIR OWN SEXUALITY.	2) SHARING OF GOSSIP/RUMORS/MYTHS CONCERNING HUMAN SEXUALITY; PERSONAL EXPLORATION AND QUEST OF FACTS CONCERNING SEXUALITY; CAREFUL OBSERVATION OF PEERS.
3) EXTREME CONCERN AND WORRY ABOUT THEIR EMOTIONAL HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS (EMOTIONAL FITNESS).	3) BEHAVIOR EXHIBITING LITTLE CONSISTENCY; WITHDRAWN, CROWD PLEASER, LONER, INTROVERT, EXTROVERT, PERIODS OF DEPRESSION.
4) FEAR OF NOT BEING ABLE TO COMPLETE HOMEWORK/SCHOOL WORK/TAST ASSIGNMENT.	4) PERFECTIONISTS OR PROCRASTINATION.
5) FEAR SCHOOL WILL CALL HOME.	5) WORRY, APPREHENSION, OVERLY CONCERNED; MAKES PROMISES, IS DEFENSIVE.

GRADE 8

stressor	signal
1) FEAR OF BEING SELECTED 1st (AND HAVING TO LEAD) AND FEAR OF BEING PICKED LAST (INTERPRETED AS BEING DISLIKED OR UNPOPULAR.	1) EXHIBIT EXTREME SHYNESS OR BOLDNESS. INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT BEHAVIOR BECOMES EVIDENT.
2) FEAR OF COMING TO TERMS WITH THEIR OWN SEXUALITY (BASED ON BITS AND PIECES AND LACK OF INFORMATION CONCERNING SEX EDUCATION).	2) SERIOUS EXPLORATION OF FACTS AND INFORMATION CONCERNING HUMAN SEXUALITY, AS WELL AS EXAMINATION OF THEMSELVES AS SEXUAL BEINGS.
3) EXTREME CONCERN AND WORRY ABOUT THEIR EMOTIONAL HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS (EMOTIONAL FITNESS).	3) BEGIN TO REJECT FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING UNHAPPY; SEEK AVOIDANCE OF DEALING WITH SPECIFIC ISSUES.
4) FEAR ACTIVITIES WHICH REQUIRE EXPOSURE OF THE PHYSICAL BODY (PHY. ED., ETC.)	4) OCCASIONALLY ABSENT FROM SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES, FEIGN ILLNESS AS AVOIDANCE, BEING EXTREMELY SHY OR CRUDE REGARDING HUMAN SEXUALITY.
5) FEAR IMAGE OF BEING "THE BIG 9th GRADER" BUT ALSO OF NOT PASSING INTO THE 9th GRADE.	5) TOUGH, WITHDRAWN, WANTS TO KNOW GRADES BUT MAY NOT UTILIZE THE INFORMATION.

GRADE 9

stressor	signal
1) FEAR OF COMING TO TERMS WITH THEIR OWN SEXUALITY (BASED ON BITS AND PIECES AND LACK OF INFORMATION CONCERNING SEX EDUCATION).	1) BEGIN OR CONTINUED SEXUAL EXPERIMENTATION.
2) FEAR ACTIVITIES WHICH REQUIRE EXPOSURE OF THE PHYSICAL BODY (PHY. ED., ETC.)	2) OCCASIONALLY ABSENT FROM SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES, FEIGN ILLNESS AS AVOIDANCE, BEING EXTREMELY SHY OR CRUDE REGARDING HUMAN SEXUALITY.
3) EXTREME CONCERN AND WORRY ABOUT THEIR EMOTIONAL HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS (EMOTIONAL FITNESS).	3) BEGIN TO REJECT FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING UNHAPPY; SEEK AVOIDANCE OF DEALING WITH SPECIFIC ISSUES.
4) FEAR OF BEING SENT TO THE V.P.'S OFFICE. CONFRONTATION WITH TEACHER. GETTING POOR GRADES.	4) EMBARRASSMENT, CURSING, PANIC, IMMEDIATE COMPROMISE/COOPERATION. TEACHER PLEASER OR OVERLY DEFENSIVE. PERIODIC RENEWED INTEREST IN TASK COMMITMENT (SHORT TERM BASIS).
5) FEAR BEING CHALLENGED TO A CONFRONTATION BY THE SAME SEX.	5) USUALLY RESULTS IN STUDENT - TO - STUDENT CONFRONTATIONS AND TO INABILITY TO USE APPROPRIATE VERBAL COMMUNICATION AND REASONING SKILLS!

GRADE 10

stressor	signal
1) FEAR OF BEING SELECTED 1st (AND HAVING TO LEAD) AND FEAR OF BEING PICKED LAST (INTERPRETED AS BEING DISLIKED OR UNPOPULAR.)	1) BEGIN OR CONTINUED SEXUAL EXPERIMENTATION.
2) FEAR ANOTHER PEER WILL VIE FOR THEIR "SWEETHEART" (SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP).	2) JEALOUSLY GUARDS RELATIONSHIP; TENDENCY TOWARD FIGHTING IN SUCH CONFRONTATIONS.
3) PERSONAL FEAR THAT THEY HAVEN'T FELT OR DERIVED A SIGNIFICANT OR POSITIVE MEANING FROM SCHOOLING ("I FEEL I TAKE SCHOOL TOO LIGHTLY" - SO MANY SUBJECT AREAS ARE JUST NOT INTERESTING TO ME", "I DON'T DO WELL IN SCHOOL BUT I DON'T KNOW WHY?").	3) TENDENCIES SHOW UP IN EXPRESSIONS OF NEGATIVE SELF-CONCEPTS.
4) FEAR OF PARTICIPATING IN ATHLETICS AND FAILING.	4) LIMITED OR LACK OF PARTICIPATION.
FEAR OF PARTICIPATING IN CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS OR SCHOOL PROJECTS AND NOT BEING POPULAR OR SELECTED FOR SPECIFICS.	LACK OF PARTICIPATION.
FEAR OF NOT COMPLETING CLASS TASK ASSIGNMENTS.	CHEATING.
FEAR OF GETTING CAUGHT CHEATING.	DENIAL, DEFENSIVE, CURSING.
5) QUESTION FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS/FAMILY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.	5) "TUNE-OUT" FROM FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AS "SIGNIFICANT" AT THIS TIME. DEFENSIVE TOWARD AUTHORITY.

GRADE 11

stressor	signal
1) FEAR OF UNDRESSING IN A GROUP. FEAR OF BEING "NOT OK"/RIDICULED IN CLASS WHEN ASKED TO SPEAK OR DEMONSTRATE. FEAR PEERS WILL NEGATIVELY VIEW THE PHYSICAL SELF ("FAT", "SKINNY LEGS", "UGLY", ETC.)	1) INTROSPECTIVE. INTERP... TION OF PHYSICAL SELF AND COMING TO TERMS/BEING HONEST ABOUT REALITIES. SEEK CONFIRMATION AS BEING "OK", OR "POSITIVE".
2) FEAR OF INADEQUATE PREPARATION OF VOCATIONAL OR ACADEMIC TRAINING.	2) EXPRESS CONFUSION IN KNOWLEDGE OF CAREER OPTIONS AND/OR INTERESTS IN JOB/CAREER/ROLE SELECTION.
3) FEAR OF NOT HAVING ENOUGH MONEY.	3) SEEK JOBS. THEFT.
4) FEAR SEXUAL EXPRESSION ("HOW DO OTHERS VIEW ME SEXUALLY").	4) HEAVY EXPERIMENTATION OR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL IN SEEKING OR MAINTAINING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OPPOSITE SEX.
5) FEAR THAT OTHER ADULTS WILL INTERPRET ROLES FOR THEM. THEY SEEK TO DEFINE THEMSELVES IN RELATION TO PEERS AND OWN VALUES AND GOALS.	5) HOSTILITY TOWARD AUTHORITY AND TOWARD MANY ADULT GROUPS. EASILY PUT ON THE DEFENSIVE.

GRADE 12

stressor

1) FEAR THAT OTHER ADULTS WILL INTERPRET ROLES FOR THEM. THEY SEEK TO DEFINE THEMSELVES IN RELATION TO PEERS AND OWN VALUES AND GOALS.
2) FEAR OF INADEQUATE PREPARATION OF VOCATIONAL OR ACADEMIC TRAINING.
3) FEAR LACK OF READINESS PAST GRADUATION.
4) FEAR OF NOT HAVING ENOUGH MONEY.
5) FEAR THAT PREOCCUPATION WITH SELF NEEDS (PHYSICAL/JOB/CAREER/PERSONAL/PEER/EGO) RESULTS IN DEFICIENCY IN THEIR SCHOOL ROLE AS A "LEARNER".

signal

1) HOSTILITY TOWARD AUTHORITY AND TOWARD MANY ADULT GROUPS. EASILY PUT ON THE DEFENSIVE.
2) EXPRESS CONFUSION IN KNOWLEDGE OF CAREER OPTIONS AND/OR INTERESTS IN JOB/CAREER/ROLE SELECTION.
3) APPEAR TO BE IRRESPONSIBLE IN DECISIONS AND ACTIONS.
4) SEEK AND HOLD JOBS (SOMETIMES TWO).
5) DEFENSIVE ("WHY DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS DUMB STUFF ANYWAY?"). FAILURE TO TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST UNLESS ACTIVITIES PROVEN "RELEVANT FOR ME".)

What to Do?

Given the uncertainties of day-to-day pressures, what should we do about the concern we have for the damaging role that stress plays in our students' lives?

No one's life is without ambiguity or inconsistency. We will always struggle with various alternatives and occasionally falter for a while as we do. We must all teach the skills for handling social situations, the demands of our jobs, the illness or death of loved ones, economic pressures, and physical illnesses or injuries. In giving our young a more balanced perspective, we need to be aware of our role in that process.

The following suggestions are given in helping students deal with stress more effectively.

1. An emphasis must be made in helping children develop a sense of trust in others. Children who get adequate stimulation--where adults try to meet their needs during periods of great dependency--develop trust in others.

2. Educators must be knowledgeable and perceptive about major transitions children face. They should prepare the child not only for the pleasures and satisfactions that a school environment has to offer, but try to understand the anxieties children will face in these new encounters. Explain to the child what will happen, what is expected, as well as what the child's responsibility is within that new setting. Encourage an atmosphere of open communication and understanding. This procedure should be initiated in early childhood education and continued. When a student feels more secure and knows what is expected, stress is reduced.

3. Students must know precisely what is expected of them. They should thoroughly understand school and classroom policies, daily assignments, and teacher expectations for assigned work, attendance policies, etc. They must know precisely what their responsibilities are. We make an assumption if and when we feel that they already know.

4. Teaching RULES and REGULATIONS helps youngsters feel more secure and capable of limits. Children learn to have a great deal more movement and freedom if they have a greater sense of security. They tend to encounter more success and are more effective in settings of change and confusion than a child who experiences a great deal of uncertainty.

5. DISCIPLINE represents rules and regulations that protect the rights and integrity of individuals. PUNISHMENT represents the price you pay for violating those rules within any setting. Students need to understand those concepts. Rules, regulations, and discipline represent a just and fair method of maintaining a sense of order within our society. Being consistent and enforcing rules is a way of helping children cope with stress and build self-control. Children who learn how to cope with rules at an early age find it easier to direct and control their impulses in a socially acceptable way later on.

6. Provide a stimulating and enriching environment that invites students to continue their natural curiosity toward learning. Within any setting youngsters require a great deal of freedom to explore. If limits are too constricting, it can stifle a youngster's curiosity and creativity and make the child feel hostile, anxious, or fearful. The curiosity of a youngster will flourish naturally in a stimulating and enriching environment.

7. It is crucially important for educators to show respect for the integrity of children in helping them achieve a sense of self-esteem and the capacity to cope with frustration and stress. Honesty toward children plays an important role in their development.

8. The social and academic environment should be interesting and challenging. Educators should make every attempt to insure that it is.

9. Help students gain a sense of mastery by coping. Understand a youngster's capacity, set reasonable expectations for achievement, and offer positive reinforcements when due.

10. Actively encourage parents to be supportive. Parents must be both emotionally and physically supportive of the needs and responsibilities of the student. Encourage parents to play a greater role in the student's education.

11. Assist youngsters in developing a greater capacity to strengthen their general resistance and deal with pressures without developing a stress reaction. Create situations and challenges just tough enough to stimulate students in learning alternatives or new ways to solve problems. Each new demanding situation leads to some stress. When the child learns to master it, the stress soon disappears. With the next encounter he experiences less stress, and with further learning he has alternatives and solutions more readily available to apply to problems. They become less stressful. In this way we help our youngsters to develop the self-confidence that occurs from having mostly successes, and from experiencing just enough failures so that failure itself doesn't lead to stress. In learning to overcome problems, we gain confidence in our inner strength, judgment, and resources. These techniques BUILD UP MENTAL FITNESS AND STRESS RESISTANCE.

12. Teach students how to:

    a. Set priorities. Decide which things are of real value and eliminate the others. In the process of elimination, remove certain time-consuming or energy-draining people or activities.

    b. Order priorities. Make a plan of what you want to accomplish and the priority in which these goals need to be reached. Begin by doing the important tasks as soon as possible.

    c. Set goals and realistic timetables. List what you think you should accomplish in lieu of what you know you can accomplish.

    d. Structure time. Chart how much time should realistically be allotted for the completion of work, and determine the priority level it holds in relation to other pending assignments.

    e. Get involved. Encourage students to get involved in a sport or hobby that they consider exciting. Encourage them to try something they never thought they could do. Suggest it be something entirely different from anything they have done before.

f. Learn from failure. Don't be afraid to make mistakes or even fail. When you make mistakes, correct them and move forward. You should put forth your best effort and concentrate on the task at hand. Set standards of excellence and work toward achieving those things which are important to you.

g. Set long-range planning. One of the most common causes of stress is the discrepancy between an individual's expectations and his or her perception of reality. Help students identify the expectations they hold for themselves--both now and for the future.

h. Identify particularly stressful events. Have students list events they find stressful. Is there a pattern? Does stress occur only when one is confronted with a certain class or a certain time of day? The student can learn a lot about himself just by doing the list. The more insight an individual has, the better he or she is able to cope. Try to discover exactly what is causing the stress. There is a reason for all stress.

i. Cultivate habits that reduce stress. Stressors are less harmful if they occur predictably. Make them predictable by arranging your schedule to fit the occurrences of the stress. Each of us has a daily cycle of highs and lows--times when we're at our best, times when we're not. Learn to recognize yours and to take advantage of your best hours.

j. Learn how to be in control. Many mental-health professionals have come to believe that chronic stress may be caused by a person's inability to make his or her wishes known and rights respected. For such individuals, assertiveness training may be an excellent method. It is much easier to clear up an emotional problem when it first appears rather than waiting until it has become deep-seated and chronic. Going for help when you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness.

k. Identify symptoms that indicate they have exceeded their stress threshold. Symptoms such as fatigue, difficulty falling asleep, periods of confusion, rapid heartbeat, sweaty hands, headaches, and an increase in the frequency and severity of colds or flu indicate you are undergoing stress. If such symptoms develop, see your physician so that organic disease can be ruled out.

l. Understand the importance of proper physical and mental conditioning. Exercise, adequate rest, and nutrition are essential. Seek prompt medical care for illnesses. By exercising, by getting enough rest, and by eating well you improve your overall strength and general resistance. You enhance your ability to handle stressors. Exercise offers both physical and emotional benefits--a sense of control over one's body, a feeling of accomplishment, a release for pent-up frustration, etc. Moreover, biochemical research suggests that regular exercise may increase the levels of brain chemicals (endorphins) that result in good feelings.

m. Learn how to react to stressful situations they cannot change. Behavior such as cigarette smoking, drinking, drugs and tranquilizers, absenteeism, and tardiness are all common methods of coping with stress. While these methods may alleviate immediate stress, in the long run they are ineffective and potentially destructive.

n. Recognize and utilize their own resources.

o. Actualize their full potential. Form a mental picture of yourself as you would like to be, the potential you. Realize that what you are today is the result of your image and beliefs of what you could be. If you do not like what you see, form a new mental picture with the qualities you want to possess. Each time you do something to develop yourself, you contribute to your feelings of self-worth and learn to respect your uniqueness.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The Harvard Medical School Health Letter, October 1979.
2. The Harvard Medical School Health Letter, October 1979.
3. Robert M. Coles, M.D. (1973 Pulitzer Prize Winner), Children in Crisis.